

15 August 1975

Brigadier General Edwin F. Black
Kra Canal Survey Office
14 Surasak Road, 5th Floor
Bangkok, Thailand

Dear General Black,

Please forgive the delay in responding to your letter. In forwarding your letter, the State Department used the wrong channel and considerable delay resulted.

I fully appreciate and share your concern regarding the proper management of the flow of Vietnamese refugees into the United States. The following background may possibly give you an appreciation of the state of affairs which has evolved over the last few months.

First of all, in light of the current political climate in Washington, our role in the management of the refugee problem has been limited to providing file checks and participating in a passive role in Task Force meetings, and of necessity, we have had no direct involvement in it. The problems which you identified, however, were recognized by the Task Force from the first and considerable interagency effort has gone specifically into the matter of keeping track of and accounting for the refugees.

Early on, Immigration and Naturalization Service instituted a program to computerize and centralize Task Force records on the refugees. This system was fraught with complications for a number of reasons, two being Vietnamese names (i.e., frequent spelling variants and American unfamiliarity with indexing them) and the rapid flux of people within the system. The system is continually updated, however, through terminals located in all of the CONUS camps and as a refugee's status and location changes, this is reflected in the data bank. Thus, ideally, current readouts can be obtained at any given moment in the majority of cases, by calling a local Washington number (632-9800). Problems still beset the system, particularly in the area of uniting family groups and keeping

them together (the large size of Vietnamese family units, for example, is a bar to sponsorship in many cases). Newsletters are being published in the individual camps and in the larger cities as the refugees move out to their new homes, but as yet the central control you envision is not functioning with any degree of perfection.

Frankly, the system you have described in your letters will in all probability never come to pass. Basically, this is due to lack of funds and, more importantly, concentration on the immediate task of getting the refugees out of the camps rather than focusing on their long range morale and mutual interdependence. The administrators of the program are trying to integrate the refugees into American society as rapidly as possible and are not immediately concerned with plans to maintain the integrity of their cultural/social community.

Where then do we stand? Many of your ideas have been incorporated into the system. We know who we have, where they are, and where they go to live after they are sponsored. Clearances were performed on each adult refugee before they could be released from a camp and complete bio-data is therefore available. A mechanism has not been established for retrieving any information the refugees may ultimately receive from their homeland once postal channels are reopened, and because of the existing political climate, one is unlikely to be developed.

In evaluating the above information, please keep in mind that as I indicated above, my Agency plays a very limited role in the refugee program. We are responsible for name tracing the refugees; nothing more. Your suggestions therefore must be addressed by the Task Force itself.

Sincerely,



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KRA CANAL SURVEY OFFICE

14 SURASAK ROAD, 5th Floor
BANGKOK, THAILAND
Tel. 37983

Cable: "KYCHOW" BANGKOK
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P.O. Box 2194

July 2, 1975

STAT

[Redacted]
Interagency Indochina Task Force
Washington, D. C.

STAT

Dear [Redacted]

On May 7, 1975, I suggested to Bill Colby that it would be to everyone's long term benefit if a permanent communications/locator"center" were established to assist the Indochina refugees. This center, which would be sponsored by private groups, assisted by grants from the major foundations, would help the refugees establish and maintain contact with one another during the difficult resettlement phase. Later I would see it evolving into a type of "alumni association", publishing a newsletter or magazine, which would not only facilitate communication between the refugees as they settle in different parts of world, but provide a medium for describing conditions as they develop in Indochina proper. (Inevitably, the refugees will reestablish some form of communication with their relatives who were left behind.)

My concern is that unless steps are taken promptly to activate and finance such a center within the private sector there will be no mechanism to receive the records and to maintain contact with these refugees when the Interagency Task Force considers its work completed.

Mr. Colby wrote on 23th May 1975, (see enclosed) that he had forwarded my letter to Ambassador Brown, but I have heard nothing further. Perhaps this is because Brown returned to the Middle East Institute. In any event, I would assume that of all the current members of the Interagency Task Force, you would best understand the long range potentials of my suggestion, and might therefore be inclined to follow through.

I am, of course, prepared to do anything I can to facilitate the establishment and operation of the center.

Sincerely yours,

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

23 May 75

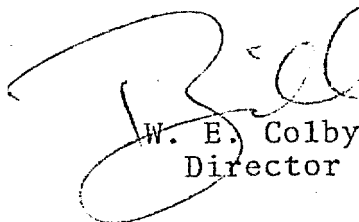
Brigadier General Edward F. Black
Kra Canal Survey Office
14 Surasak Road, 5th Floor
Bangkok, Thailand

Dear Ed,

Thank you for your letter of May 7. The suggestions you have made concerning private organizational assistance to Vietnamese refugees are well conceived.

I have taken the liberty of referring your excellent suggestions to Ambassador Dean Brown who heads the Inter-Agency Task Force on Indochina.

Warmest regards,



W. E. Colby
Director

Executive Registry

75-6335/B

23 MAY 1975

The Honorable L. Dean Brown
Director, Inter-Agency Task Force
Department of State

Dear Dean,

I am enclosing a letter which I received recently from Brigadier General Edward F. Black in which he outlines some suggestions which may merit your consideration.

I have informed General Black that I am referring his letter to you.

Sincerely,

/s/ Bill

W. E. Colby
Director

Enc.

EA/DDO/[] (23 May 75)

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ILLEGIB

May 7, 1975.

Mr. William Colby,
Director, Central Intelligence Agency,
Langley, Va.

Dear Bill —

Looking ahead, it would seem that the need to maintain contact with our friends in Indochina will become increasingly important.

While there probably are no reliable figures on the numbers of refugees from Indochina or where they will ultimately settle, it must be in the order of eighty thousand. Some of those who have come out will want to go back. There have been press reports to this respect concerning a group of Vietnamese aircraft mechanics evacuated to Guam. Some who came out may be encouraged or even asked to return. Senator Mc Govern is reported to have drafted a bill to this effect.

May I suggest that a well organized effort be started right away to establish rosters and address files of these refugees, and to try to maintain contact with them as they move around seeking to adjust to their new life outside of Indochina. Inevitably they will find ways to reestablish communications with their families and friends who were left behind. In time, they may be able and willing to provide us with a clearer picture of the situation in their former homeland.

In the beginning we could be of great service to them and thereby win their confidence and good will if we would promptly set up under the auspices of the American Friends of Vietnam, the Asia Foundation or some other appropriate private organization, a very simple and basic information center where the refugees could apply for information of their friends and relatives who were evacuated. In the last minute confusion, I am sure many were separated. We would start with such lists and data as may presently be available to State and Defense. Once the refugees knew where to go to ask about their friends, then by the simple process of putting them in touch we could refine and up-date our rosters. Eventually this service will develop into more organized ways of keeping in touch-- newsletters, magazines, local chapters, etc. In the end, they, the private organization and the government will all benefit.

But if this is to be done properly and efficiently, we must start at once.

If I can be of service in helping get such a project established, I would drop what I am doing and pitch in. Please let me know what you think. If we wait, it will be very difficult to reestablish contact.

Regards, Bill

| ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|---|---|
| SUBJECT: (Optional) Response to Edwin F. Black, Brig Gen, USA (Ret.) | | | <div>Executive Registry 75-6335/1</div> | |
| FROM: DDO/EA/LOGS 4E21, Hqs. | | EXTENSION | NO. | |
| | | | DATE 15 August 1975 | |
| TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building) | | DATE | | OFFICER'S INITIALS |
| | | RECEIVED | FORWARDED | |
| 1. CEA 5D3107, Hqs. | | | | <div>Correspondence commenced with a 7 May letter from Gen Black to the DCI (Tab E). This letter was answered (Tab D) by the DCI on 23 May and simultaneously, Gen Black's suggestions were passed to Amb Brown at the Interagency Task Force (IATF) (Tab C).</div> <div>On 15 July I received a letter from Gen Black (Tab B) addressed to me personally at the IATF. Tab A is a proposed response to this latest missive. This response has been thoroughly coordinated with CEA, [] who is also the Agency's Senior Representative to the IATF.</div> |
| 2. | | | | |
| 3. DDO 4E26, Hqs. | 18 AUG 1975 | | | |
| 4. | | | | |
| 5. DCI 7D5607 | 8/17/75 | | | |
| 6. | | | | |
| 7. DDO/EA/LOGS 4E21, Hqs. | | | | |
| 8. | | | | |
| 9. | | | | |
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| 11. | (EXECUTIVE REGISTRY FILE) | | | |
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